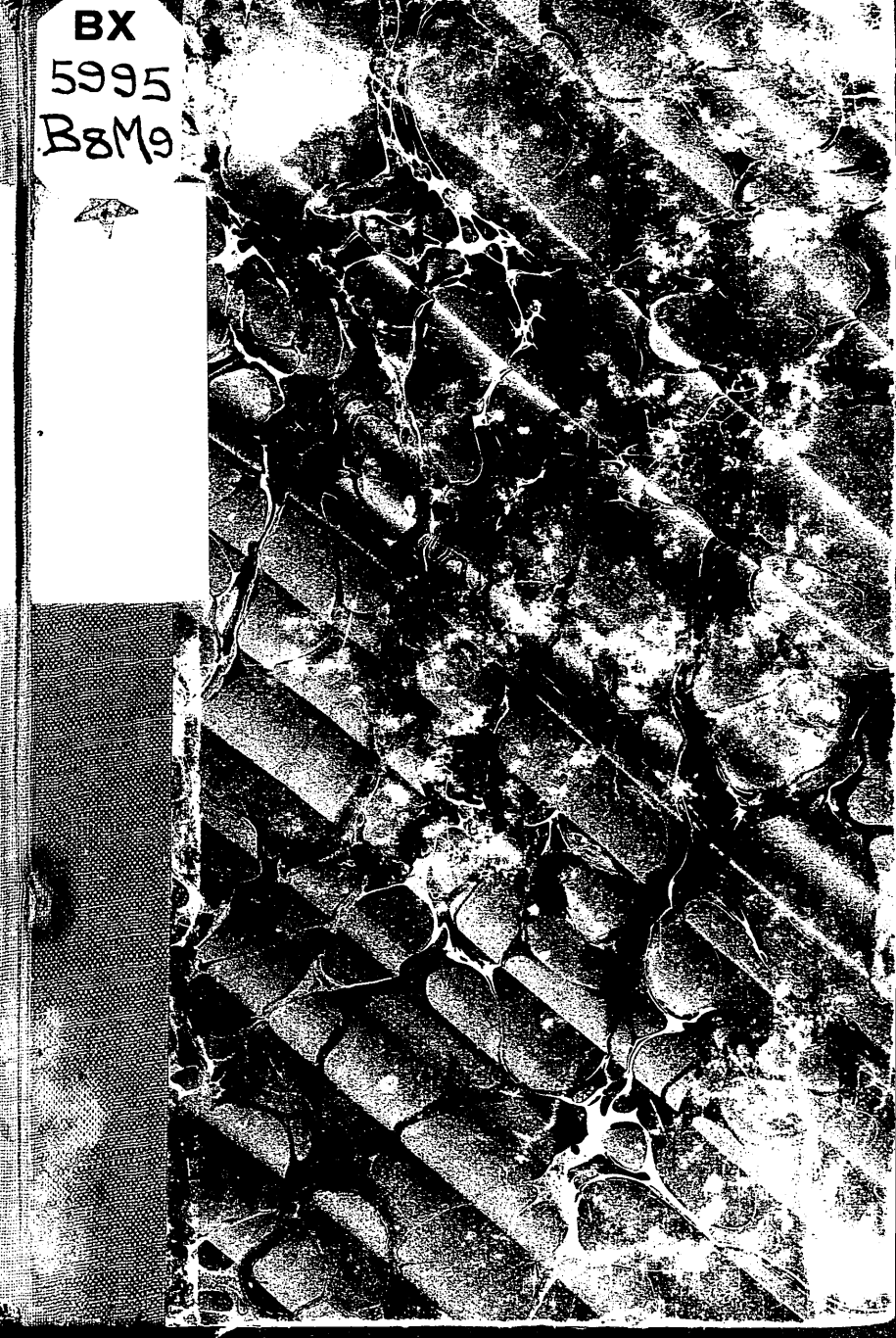


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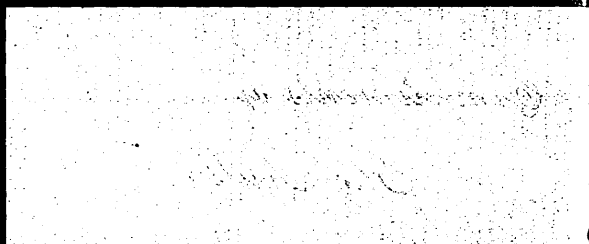
by

Philip Stafford Moxom



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The Author.*

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PHILLIPS BROOKS

A Tribute

Being a Sermon preached in
THE FIRST BAPTIST MEETING-HOUSE
Clarendon Street and Commonwealth Avenue
Boston

Sunday Morning, January 29th, 1893

by

PHILIP STAFFORD MOXOM



BOSTON
C. H. SIMONDS & CO.
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1893

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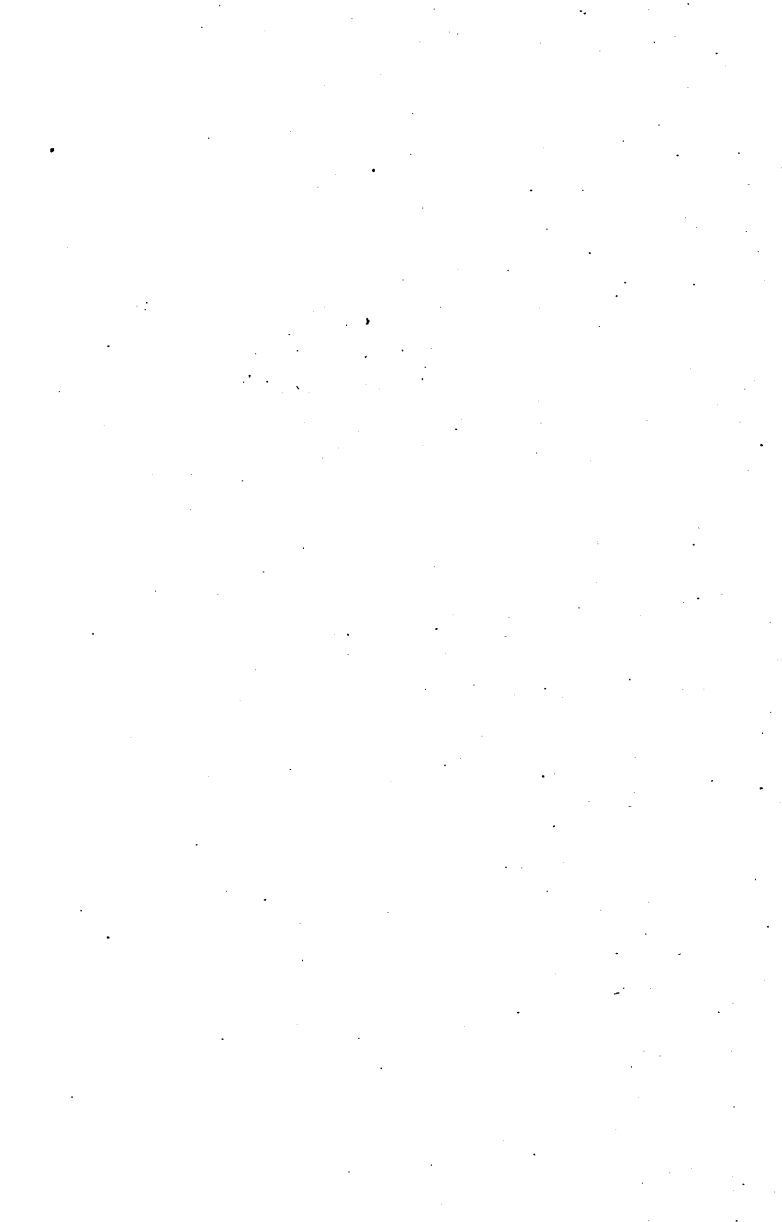
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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE following discourse was written on Saturday, the 28th, and preached to the First Baptist Church on Sunday, the 29th of January, 1893. The request that it be published was immediate, and could not be refused. I have not felt at liberty to make any material changes of the form in which it was given to my people. Imperfect as it is in form, it yet expresses an appreciation of the great Preacher and Bishop, and an affection for the great man, which are as sincere as the sorrow over his departure is profound and must be lasting.

P. S. M.

BOSTON, *February 1, 1893.*



PHILLIPS BROOKS

A TRIBUTE

"And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah."—I SAM. 25 : 1.

THE Israelites lamented the death of a prophet; one who represented the highest that they knew or thought of God. In the sorrow which moved all hearts was blended their veneration for the seer, their appreciation of the councillor and judge, and their love for the man.

There are certain great experiences and emotions which reveal the kinship of men in all countries and ages. Humanity is one in love and sorrow, as it is one in mortality.

Here in this latest time and generation a prophet is dead, and a people mourns. A universal sense of bereavement, particularizing itself in each man and woman into a sense of personal loss, pervades the city. Suddenly we have forgotten whatever was accidental or incidental about Bishop Brooks, and we feel only that a great man and a great friend of us all has passed out of our presence and beyond the

reach of eye or hand or voice. How strange and sad it all is! We cannot adjust ourselves to it. It is the oft-repeated yet never familiar contradiction of life. The strong man, the great mind, the effluent personality, whose presence in our streets made the city seem safer and the very air wholesomer, suddenly, without warning, passes out through "the gate and grave of death," and we are left, stunned, incredulous, dislocated for the moment from all sense of security and happiness, with our very sense of reality shaken and paralyzed. Six days have passed since the tidings flew through our city that death had struck the strong man. Mount Auburn has opened its gates to receive the dead, and the solemn and stately obsequies are over, and yet we have not accepted, nor even realized, the bereavement that has fallen upon us. There is a protest in our grief that even faith has not yet reduced. It seems so unreasonable, so out of all nature and judgment, that this man should be taken; it seems so to traverse and confound all rational spiritual economics, that a thousand broken and fruitless lives should go on and this life abounding in beneficent power should cease from among men.

But we are not wise. It may be God is teaching us, in ways that we must perceive in order to have peace, that what we see of life and action is after all only the beginning and vestibule of life. There are vaster spheres in which this little life is islanded, and what seems loss to us is gain and advance in the great whole of life. By-and-by we shall say of even this bereavement,—

“Nor blame I Death because he bare
The use of virtue out of earth,
I know transplanted human worth
Will bloom to profit elsewhere.”

But it is not to attempt any explanation of the astounding and immeasurable loss which has overtaken us that I take for my theme to-day the man Phillips Brooks. Nor is it to give voice in this place to my own sense of personal grief and impoverishment in his death. I would speak, if I can, for the general heart. I would speak for you, and to you, who, in common with all the people, seek some relief from the oppressive sorrow that lies heavy on the community; and I would, if I can, aid you and myself in the effort to adjust ourselves to the situation in which Divine Providence has placed us.

It is too soon to estimate rightly the character and work of Phillips Brooks. We have no measures for such a work yet, and we have not the calm and interpretative temper. Besides, he is still too near to us. A great man, like a great mountain, must be seen in perspective. One must journey away from Mont Blanc, twenty, thirty miles, in order to get a just idea of its magnitude and sublimity. Seldom, perhaps never, has a great man been appreciated to the full measure of his greatness by those who are close to him. The personal relation, the personal attraction or repulsion, prevents a purely judicial action of the mind. We cannot look critically, in the true sense, at a man whom we greatly love or strongly dislike. Our personal interests are too deeply involved, and our personal affections are too strongly moved, to allow entirely clear vision. What was the real scope of Phillips Brooks' influence and work, and what was the real significance of his character, in the life of this generation, do not, and cannot, at once appear. Yet it is one of the surest signs of humanity's progress that society steadily grows in power of appreciating the worth of exceptional personalities. In no

preceding century has there been so wide and, in general, so just a contemporary appreciation of great poets and statesmen and preachers as in the nineteenth century. The collective man continually increases in capacity for rational self-measurement.

But some men are more quickly and more justly appreciated than others because of their peculiar qualities and gifts. Especially is this true of men who appeal most effectually to our highest nature, and through that, most powerfully awaken and attract our love. This is eminently true of Phillips Brooks. In his case there is a certain advantage in nearness. Significant as his work was and must ever be, he, himself, the extraordinary personality, was still more significant. Without the slightest of those arts by which men seek to gain popular favor, with, indeed, a certain colossal artlessness in manner and speech, he drew multitudes of people—the most diverse in circumstance, training and culture—into sympathy with his purpose, into love for himself, and into confidence in his message. Many men are admired for their attainments, or revered for their integrity, or exalted for their genius; but Phillips Brooks was

loved for that indefinable something—how shall I express it?—that fulness of humanity which made him the embodiment of all that is noblest and most manly in man.

He was confessedly a great preacher,—the greatest, we need not hesitate to say, in the English-speaking world of to-day; but he was greater as a man than as a preacher. He had the genius of the poet, though seldom using the poetic form of expression. He had that rare intellectual and spiritual sympathy which gave him an interpretative power that seemed scarcely to need a basis of experience. But what all people felt, high and low, rich and poor, cultivated and ignorant, was the big, vital, affluent personality—the man in whom every one recognized something of his own best self. Some one has justly spoken of him as preëminently synthetic in his intellectual method. It is a true characterization, and, if I may use the expression, his nature was synthetic and comprehensive. Most other men are provincial; this man was continental. A man who had heard Dr. Brooks preach a number of times exclaimed, half impatiently, “I am tired of his everlasting optimism.” The complaint was an involuntary

testimony to the real greatness of the preacher. Dr. Brooks was not unacquainted with the tragic side of life,—with those elements in human experience which find philosophical expression in pessimism, but he knew that the needed tonic and medicine of the human spirit is a persistent, invincible and exuberant hopefulness.

There are moods in which we are prone to hug to our hearts our grief and bitterness and despair. But these moods are full of noxious miasm to the soul. The brave man will fight his way out of them. The true helper of his fellow-men will strive to sweep them away. It was not because he did not see the "dark side" of life that Phillips Brooks dwelt so persistently on the "bright side," but because his spiritual instincts and his faith in God made him press on ever the assault of divine day upon the black night of human sorrow and sin. Hence it was, in part at least, that men trusted and loved him. His powerful personality, surcharged with sympathy and hopefulness, laid hold of their weary and fainting spirits and lifted them into courage and faith.

Phillips Brooks belonged to the people. By blood, and culture, and station, and wealth, an

aristocrat; by nature and by grace he was a man of the people, loving all, in touch with all, simply, nobly, and untiringly ministrant to all. The common people loved him, and claimed him with a frank and pathetic confidence. A cabman exclaimed to a friend on the street, "Our dear Bishop is dead!" A messenger-boy said: "Isn't it too bad, that good priest is dead!" When asked by a gentleman who it was, the boy simply answered, "Why, Father Brooks; didn't you know?" On the streets, in the shops and homes, among stable-men and car-drivers, everywhere, the tidings of Phillips Brooks' death awakened a genuine sorrow. On the day of the funeral a laboring-man in rough working-attire gazed a moment at the body, and turned aside, his face drenched with tears. A poor woman, ill-clad, pressed her way through the throng, laid a handful of roses on the coffin, and withdrew, weeping bitterly. These incidents are but examples. They reveal the universal feeling. There is something noble and sacred in this common grief. It exalts the community while it attests the singular greatness of this man who could so draw all classes into a sense of kinship with himself. The univer-

sality of the sorrow shows how truly Phillips Brooks belonged to the people. He was a loyal Episcopalian in the very best sense in which a man can be loyal to the church of his choice, but he was not and could not be confined in the Episcopal Church. He belonged to no church, or party, or sect; rather, he belonged to all churches and parties and sects, in so far as they represent elemental truths and express elemental sympathies. The Congregationalists claimed him; the Unitarians claimed him; the Baptists claimed him; the Methodists claimed him, and the claims of all were just; because, beneath all these names and party badges are the common human heart and the one universal church of God, and to that human heart, and that church of God, Phillips Brooks belonged. In the sorrow of the Episcopal Church there is no narrow jealousy; in the grief of other churches there is no impertinence. In the death of our beloved Bishop God strikes a silence through all the debates of ecclesiastical and theological controversy, and abolishes the walls of denominational partition.

It may be that this death will set a crown on the labors of the life by making for all the future more pervasive and powerful the sense of Christian unity and spiritual fellowship among the churches of this city.

The greatest blessing of God to humanity is a man who is spiritually great. The finest product and expression of Christianity is a human life in which the deeper truths of Christianity become concrete in character and action. The entire significance of religion appears in personality. The fullest revelation of God is in and through a man. The Christ was "the first-born among many brethren." Every good man, in proportion to the scope of his nature, is revelatory of God; so a great, spiritual personality is a truer expression of the divine nature than any theology. The noblest temple of God is a man. In man, ever-growing and ever-aspiring, truth progressively attains its finest and fullest expression. The last and highest result of Art, and Poetry, and Literature, and Science, and Philosophy, appears in man. Life, concentrated in personality, is the point at which burst into blaze the blended forces of the true, the beautiful and the good. Creation is not the

fabrication of worlds, but the making of men. From savage to saint the divine process goes on, and all else is but incidental or ancillary to this supreme result,—“until we all come unto a perfect man,—unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” The largest and finest types of manhood and womanhood are the clearest witnesses of the divinity that is in the world. Thus every morally great man is a token and pledge of God’s gracious purpose.

In every sphere of human interest and activity the source of real power is not the instrument or the method, but the effective personality. In poetry the rules of prosody do not make the poet, but the poet creates or reveals the deep-lying structural principles of poetic expression. Art students leave their text-books and go to the great artist, that they may catch the inspiration and feel the propulsive force of his genius. In the realm of material industries the crowds of small men are helpless, beyond certain narrow limits, until the great mind comes that can organize and wield, in some true sense incarnate in himself, all material means and forces. In the realm of the spiritual life the same is true,—scriptures and theologies are feeble and

almost fruitless until the great prophet-soul comes to fill them with significance by a visible and passionate embodiment of the truths which scriptures and theologies contain. Souls, not mere words; lives, not mere formulas, are the vehicles of the divine communications. Life is propagated by contact. The history of the spiritual progress of humanity may be read in the biographies of its great spiritual personalities. A St. Paul wins paganism to Christianity. A Luther makes a Reformation. A Wesley regenerates a church. The great spiritual personality is the expression and instrument of the divine power. Through it life flows in fresh tides of quickening energy to lift human society to higher levels of thought and feeling and action.

Such a personality was he whom we mourn to-day. In him the truths of the spirit had new and powerful expression. Through him fresh tides of quickening energy poured upon our generation and have raised the level of thought and feeling and action.

Putting out of mind as fully as possible the personal charm that drew us to him, and exercising the carefulest judgment that we can com-

mand, must we not say that this man, to an almost unexampled degree in our generation, has changed the whole tone of the life with which he came in contact, and has left the world immeasurably richer than he found it? This is no fulsome praise of an individual man, but a reverent recognition and acknowledgment of the divine grace that wrought in and through him for the salvation of men.

It is the common tragedy of history that the prophet-souls have not been widely recognized while they moved visibly among their fellow-men. What a story may we read from Calvary to Smithfield! But as the years pass the atmosphere of the world and the temper of men change. Men no longer burn the prophets and slay the apostles of the Lord. But even yet the noblest messengers of divine truth must often wait for large recognition until they have passed to where

“Beyond these voices there is peace.”

While they live in the world they are too close to men, and often the personal contact prevents dispassionate judgment, and personal prejudices prevent true appreciation. But death comes and

clears the air, strips away the incidental and the adventitious, settles the dust of debate and defines the personality, and then the character shines out in its essential grandeur. With the solemnity of death comes sobriety, deepening into sanity. The best that is in us rises to the surface, and we see, too late, that a messenger of the Most High has walked among us. Meantime the blessing has not been wholly lost. The unrecognized prophet and saint has sown life with the seeds of the better life that came into the world through him, and the late but sure harvest justifies and compensates the lonely and painful sowing. But there are other prophets to whom the eyes of contemporaries are not wholly blind. The world steadily grows in power of spiritual appreciation. And there are rare souls that win on the hither side of death a wide hearing for their message and a large appreciation of their spirit.

Phillips Brooks was such an one as wins a larger and juster appreciation during earthly life than most men. His situation, his temperament, his peculiar gifts of mind and person, and his vocation as a prophet of the higher spiritual truths, won rather than repelled; won

irresistibly and persistently. Everything in his life seemed to conspire to give him a secure place of eminent power in the midst of this generation. His personal qualities were of that kind which are always attractive, and in him these qualities had an exceptional largeness. Physically of colossal mould, he was mentally and spiritually of great scope and fulness. Need I recall to you his manliness, that great robustness of nature which by his mere presence invigorated the weak, roused the torpid, cowed the pretentious, and refreshed the weary like sunshine and mountain air? And he was as simple and genuine as he was manly. A true soul flashed from his unforgettable eyes, and pulsed in his warm hand-clasp. But I cannot trust myself to speak of those personal qualities which, always manifest, were yet most fully revealed in the intercourse of a personal friendship. Who that has known him at all does not know of his sympathy? It was a strong, healthy sympathy, that strengthened by its touch. And what breadth of intellectual and moral understanding he possessed! He understood men as by intuition, seized their point of view, appreciated their difficulties, and

felt the pang of their trial, or the exhilaration of their joy, as if he had passed through their very experience. Through all his manliness and sympathy and breadth of understanding, an understanding that was as sane and wholesome as could be, there was diffused a fine, exalting spirituality. His sense of God was the most complete and constant I have ever known in any soul. This gave an indescribable nobility to all his talk, and bred in all who came near him an instant confidence in his utterance. Somewhat of the weight and sincerity of his best utterance was present in his lightest casual word. It is natural for people to love and honor such a man; and how they loved and honored him! This universal love and trust gave him a vantage-ground of unrivalled influence.

He was not an orator in the ordinary sense of that term, but his speech wielded a spell over the minds of men greater than any mere oratory can ever exercise. It was the great man, and the great love that people gave him, as well as the great message that he uttered, which made his words so thrilling and potent.

Then, too, certain defects and needs of the present time joined in the fortunate conspiracy of inheritance, and station, and culture, and personal traits, to give him a position of eminent power. Much of recent thought has been analytic and skeptical, with marked tendencies toward pessimism. Destructive criticism has been rife, and that soon brings a great weariness, sometimes even a profound distaste for life. Phillips Brooks was radically synthetic; he was imaginative, and constructive; and he was profoundly hopeful. God and Christ, and faith, and salvation, and the life of the spirit, were to him the supreme realities. These realities were not so much held by him in the grasp of reasoned conviction as they were incorporate in his very nature. As Dr. Lyman Abbott has justly said: "He was great in just those elements which this critical and analytical age most needs—the spiritual and the synthetic. The world alternates between pulling its tools and toys to pieces to see how they are made, and lamenting because they are gone. Dr. Brooks was perceptive and constructive; saw with a spiritual vision, and reported what he saw; was a messenger and a witness; was

rich in all the elements of a noble life, and out of his richness imparted to others.”

There is no word that describes his function as well as that old word, prophet. To a degree beyond that of most great preachers Phillips Brooks was a prophet,—a speaker for God. His sense of God I have spoken of as the most complete and the most constant that I ever knew in any soul. He believed mightily in God. He lived in the thought of God’s presence and love and power. His faith pervaded all his ideas of man and the world. It was not something built up on logical deductions, but a perception, a consciousness, an atmosphere enveloping and suffusing the whole of his life. His sense of Christ as the revelation of God in modes of human nature and experience had in it a reality like that of St. John:—“That which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life; and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear testimony, and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested to us;”—thus he might have spoken. Thus, indeed, in essence, he did speak. And this Christ

he made vivid, powerful, almost palpable, to men, as he poured forth his impassioned testimony.

With such faith, with such a sense of God in Christ, loving and redeeming men, he spoke always with a great hopefulness. Next to his sense of divinity, and inseparable from it, was his sense of humanity. He loved man with a great, absorbing passion of pure good-will. As he bore witness of the transcendent God and the God in Christ, so he bore witness of the God in the world and in the hearts and lives of men. Doubts he met, not with subtle argumentation, but with the testimony of vision and experience. He met fears with the courage of his own sublime assurance. He met weakness and weariness with the affluent strength of a divine ministry to all human need. His one theme, uttered in thousand-fold form and with thousand-fold illustration, was God's salvation of the world through love. He made men feel the reality of God, and he made them see and appreciate and respect their own nature by revealing to them its divine possibilities. The two notes of his message, infinitely varied, were the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of men; and utter-

ing this message with the confidence of an utter faith and the insight of an all-possessing love, and the force of his whole majestic and inspired personality, he brought the unbelieving to trust, and the despairing to hope, and the indifferent to seriousness, and the sluggish to activity, and the tempest-tossed to peace. How many souls has he borne, St. Christopher-like, across the gulfs of sorrow, and out of the bogs of sensuality, and over the mountains of hopelessness! So he spoke and distilled his life into service to men; and so he drew all hearts to him while he lived, and made them all mourners when he died.

We cannot measure his work. No man can measure it. Let us leave that to God. We only know, with inextinguishable sorrow for ourselves, that he was, we knew him and loved him, and he is not, for God took him.

It is vain to ask why. It would be a traitorous impeachment of his faith to revolt. For him there can be no regret. In the fulness of his ripened powers, with every nerve tense with consecrated effort for the good of men, he has heard the bidding, "Come home!"

What contrasts with his life do we see about us!

"That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it;
This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it.

.

"That, has the world here—should he need the next,
Let the world mind him!
This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed
Seeking shall find him."

Does his life, in view of what we thought and believed it still might be, seem a broken one, rich indeed, but still unfulfilled? Think rather how great and abundant that life has been! How large must be the fruitage from his toil for years and years to come. What a heritage of beautiful memories and inspiring hopes he has left us! For him there is only rest and joy unspeakable, and the fruition of his dearest hopes. What greetings have come to him already! What glad companionships has he renewed and found! What fuller vision he has attained of the divine and eternal beauty!

What greater service is there for him there whither he has gone? We know not, only we are sure that God appoints the task, as He bestows the honor, according to fitness. Like the great poet, Robert Browning, whom he studied and loved, the poet of invincible courage and

invincible hope, because the poet of invincible faith, Phillips Brooks was

“One who never turned his back but marched breast
forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong
would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

“No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time
Greet the unseen with a cheer;
Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,
'Strive and thrive!' cry 'Speed,—fight on, fare ever
There as here!'"

Bravely he lived; swiftly and bravely he died.
Elsewhere he lives and works with God.

Let us honor his character and his work by
such love of God and men; such fidelity to
truth; such largeness of thought and sympathy,
and such devotion to the highest ends as shall
hasten the day for the coming of which he gave
his whole life, when the brotherhood of man
shall be realized at last in the universal realiza-
tion of the Fatherhood of God.





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